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Luther the Musician

Honors Thesis
for
Mr. James B. Erb

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree
Bachelor of Arts

Charles Lathan Hill

1968

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The chief contributions of Martin Luther to Western civilization are in the fields of theology and religious reform; but his influence upon, and even his direct contributions to, the development of music also are of considerable importance. Luther has established a place for himself in history as "the great German religious reformer who began the Protestant Reformation" (Brit.,436), but his abilities as a musician are often overlooked. That Luther had a great love for music is clear from a letter which he sent to Ludwig Senfl, the court musician at Munich, on October 4, 1530, in which he says: "I firmly believe, nor am I ashamed to assert, that next to theology no art is equal to music; for it is the only one, except theology, which is able to give a quiet and happy mind. ...But why do I praise music now, trying to depict--or rather to disfigure--so great a subject on so small a slip of paper? But my love for music, which has often refreshed me and set me free from great worries, abounds and bubbles over." (quoted in Plass,983). Indeed, Luther's influence in the history of music cannot be underestimated. "The fact that we possess a great body of German Protestant church music is mainly attributable to Luther's understanding and love of music." (Buszin, 80).

Martin Luther was greatly influenced by musical experiences which occurred throughout his life, but most especially in his youth. He was born on November 10, 1483, at Eisleben in Thuringian Saxony.¹ Though Luther's parents, Hans and Margaret, were strict with him, he is reported to have had a happy home

¹Unless otherwise footnoted, the statements concerning Luther's life are taken from the article on Luther in the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

life. Certainly, his parents provided him with a religious atmosphere in his home and saw to it he was well-educated. Soon after his birth, Luther's family moved to Mansfeld, and it was here that he attended his first school.

Luther's pre-university schooling was typical of that of most young Germans of his time. He attended a Latin school at Mansfeld, and a school at Magdeburg and one at Eisenach. The Cathedral School at Mansfeld was taught by members of the Brethren of the Common Life. This group, founded by Gerard Groot in the fourteenth century, was closely connected with the Augustinian order, and was closely connected also with the system and discipline of the Church. (Hastings, 839). One of the main goals of the Brethren of the Common Life was to interest themselves in the religious teaching of the young, and their schools were very strict with severe punishment often being used as an educational aid. (Todd, 17). In the school at Mansfeld, Luther was taught in a somewhat rough and ready fashion to read, write, sing, and to understand Latin. (Todd, 3). Although the school life was harsh at times, Luther and his companions did have some enjoyable moments which they spent in singing and lute-playing. Luther was able to gain many friends through his musical talents. "Like many an inhibited and deep-down sad youth, Martin utilized his musical gifts, his lute-playing and singing, to remain a welcome good fellow among a circle of friends." (Erikson, 83).

Luther also used his talent to help earn his keep in the Cathedral School. He joined a little choir which went around singing on the streets of Mansfeld and begging according to the custom of the day. (Todd, 17). This singing in the streets

sometimes earned him little more than a bit of bread or a piece of meat, but it could be especially profitable at Christmas or during other church festivals, (Fife, Revolt, 18). It also left some impressions which Luther never forgot. "In contrast with the terrors aroused by the thought of the Last Judgment, the Christmas festival must have awakened his imagination to the poetry of the Nativity, for on Holy Night he sang in the Mansfeld streets of the Christ Child born in Bethlehem. This too left a deep imprint, and in mature years bore fruit in the Christmas songs, such as Von Himmel hoch, da komm' ich her, in which he puts the old medieval Latin hymns into simple German." (Fife, Revolt, 13). Luther often altered the texts of old secular and sacred folksongs to suit his purposes. Such is the case with Von Himmel hoch which is modeled after an old secular garland song which begins with the words Aus fremden Landen komm ich her. (Ameln, 17). "There can be no doubt that Luther intentionally took over the older religious folksong to serve as a connecting link and thereby prepare the way for the "new hymn" and ensure wide acceptance. Even the secular folksong served him to this end and became another source for the Reformation hymn. (Ameln, 17).

Luther's schooling at Magdeburg and Eisenach was much the same as that at Mansfeld, although probably more pleasant. Music was taught in every school, no matter how small. Robert Fife stresses its importance:

This was of high importance to Martin: he had unusual gifts for song and devoted himself to it with enthusiasm throughout life. (Fife, Revolt, 18).

The technical knowledge of music which he possessed in later years was due to the training of his youth, and for this Magdeburg gave rich opportunity. (Fife, Revolt, 24).

Luther was apparently happiest at Eisenach, where he probably discovered the joy of good learning and of poetry. The curriculum there consisted mainly of the speaking, writing and versifying of Latin. (Todd, 18). Luther's career in school in the towns of Magdeburg and Eisenach was not unusual in any way. He sang as a choirboy in the streets of these towns, but it is not to be inferred from this fact that he was any poorer than most students. (Lau, 36).

Luther's schooling, of course, was closely connected with his religious life and training. "To sing in the choir of the church was a communal duty expected of the schoolboys and their masters and called for their presence not only on Sunday, but at the regular daily offices as well." (Fife, Revolt, 18). We can be certain that through participation in the various liturgical forms of service, Luther received much more than a mere introduction to musical techniques, and became thoroughly familiar with the liturgy he was later to reform. His activities as a choir boy kept Luther constantly concerned with the brilliant figures and beautiful stories of Christian mythology. (Fife, Young, 32).

"...there can be little doubt that despite the clouds of mistrust which Luther preferred to remember so exclusively, there must have been moments and performances which permitted his inner treasure of vocabulary and melody to flower." (Erikson, 80). The influence on his later life of the experiences of Martin Luther as a schoolboy and a choirboy in the towns of Mansfeld, Magdeburg, and Eisenach cannot be overlooked, and is well summed up by Fife:

The services of the schoolboys required daily religious exercises; as choirboys they played an especially important role in the processions and religious festivals which were such a passion of the later Middle Ages and which allowed so much opportunity for musical features. So ardent a spirit as young Luther's not only received

the training in musical technique which these observances brought and which was later so important for him, but also must have stored within itself many of the phrases and pictures which later came so readily to hand from the solemn litany of later medieval worship as sung in psalm and hymn, in versicle and responsory. (Fife, Young, 37).

In April, 1501, at the age of eighteen, Luther entered the University of Erfurt, one of the oldest and best-attended universities in Germany. He took the usual arts course and graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1502. The courses offered at Erfurt are much like our present-day secondary school subjects. The seven disciplines offered "...dealt with grammar, dialectics, and rhetoric (the trivium), and geometry, arithmetic, music, and astronomy (the quadrivium)." (Lau, 38). Occasionally, Luther used to walk home from Erfurt. On one such trip, he is reported to have cut his leg on his sword, and was laid up for several weeks. Luther said of this incident that he prayed to the Blessed Virgin and that while confined to his bed he taught himself to play the lute. (Todd, 20). Luther was happy at the University of Erfurt, and he often played the lute and sang songs with his friends. By 1505, Luther had finished the requirements for his master's degree.

Luther's father had always wanted his son to be a lawyer. Young Martin now came to a milestone in his career. Just before he was about to enter a law school, he narrowly missed being struck by lightning in a thunderstorm on July 2, 1505. He was so shaken and overcome with fear of the Last Judgment that he vowed to become a monk. He sought admission to the house of Augustinian Hermits in Erfurt, and on July 16, 1505 entered their order, against the wishes of his father. In Todd's view, this act shows that for the

first time, Luther, the thinker, scholar, and lover of music, could take advice, weigh it, make his own judgment, and then take the necessary actions to put his own conclusions into action with dispatch. (Todd, 31). This type of decisiveness of action was characteristic of Luther throughout his life.

Martin Luther was ordained a priest in the Augustinian order in April, 1507 and was chosen for advanced theological studies. The Augustinian order was famous for its psalmody, of which it was extremely proud. "...it was certainly not a coincidence that Martin, for whom song had assumed such exclusive importance, chose the order which combined the cultivation of the voice with strict observance and intellectual sincerity." (Erikson, 131).

The head of the Augustinians at Erfurt and the vicar-general of all German Augustinians, Johann von Staupitz, remained Luther's teacher, friend, and patron throughout his life. In 1508, on the advice of von Staupitz, Luther went to the University of Wittenberg, which had been founded in 1502. The town of Wittenberg was small and remote compared to Erfurt. Both the University of Wittenberg and the Castle Church of All Saints were patronized by the Elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise, who was to prove an invaluable help to Luther after his excommunication. In 1510, Luther was sent to Rome and was shocked by the corruption he saw. He returned to Wittenberg with growing doubts.

On October 12, 1512, Luther received his doctor's degree from the University of Wittenberg. He had begun having preaching duties in 1511, and soon his religious and theological duties increased. At the same time, Luther's burden of guilt and doubts and uncertainties also grew. These difficulties became acute problems and

finally broke out into the open in the indulgence controversy of 1517, when Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses on the door of the Castle Church of All Saints. In the uproar which followed, Luther was called upon to defend or recant his theological views many times. This he did in formal disputations, interviews, and through his writings. In January, 1521, Pope Leo X issued the bull of formal excommunication, and later that year, Luther was declared a heretic and an outlaw by the Edict of Worms. His life in danger, Luther was secretly lodged in the castle of the Wartburg, near Eisenach, by Frederick the Wise. While in hiding, Luther finished an exposition of the Magnificat, a form of the litany which he had always loved, and prepared an edition of sermons on the Epistles and Gospels at Mass. From 1522 on, Luther turned a great deal of his attention toward achieving a reform of the services of the church, especially in the area of the writing and adapting of hymns to be sung during the service by the congregation. (Strunk, 151). "It was during his Wartburg captivity that he translated the New Testament, published in 1522, into the mother tongue of the German people. After giving them the Scriptures he felt the need of psalms and hymns in the German language, and employed others to supply them." (Tillett, 422).

In an attempt to carry out his reform of the services, Luther wrote a tract entitled Formula Missae et Communionis (Order of Mass and Communion), published in December, 1523. In this tract Luther expressed his appreciation for some of the older German hymns from the Middle Ages and his desire to find poets who would write new hymns in a proper devotional style. (Leupold, 191). He reformed

the rite and stated his policy of reform when he said: "In the meantime we shall try all things, what is good we shall retain." (quoted in Buszin, 90). When he was unable to find enough response to his requests for new hymns, Luther began writing and composing his own. In 1524, a hymnbook by Johann Walther and Luther (Geistliches Gesangbüchlein) appeared. It contained eight hymns, four of which are credited to Luther. In 1526, Luther's vernacular version of the liturgy (Deutsche Messe und Ordnung des Gottesdienstes) was published. The year before, Luther had insisted in a tract entitled Widder die hymelischen Propheten (Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments) that hymns be sung in the vernacular of the people, and that they be idiomatic and fitting. (Buszin, 94).

In June of 1525, the year of the Peasants' War, Luther married Katherine von Bora, a former nun. Luther had a happy family life and spent many evenings in his home singing and playing music with his friends. (McGiffert, 229). "Luther is reported to have sung the alto part in performances of polyphonic music at his home; he was a competent enough musician to compose melodies and at least one short motet--the four-part Non moriar sed vivam--and perhaps another (Höre Gott meine Stimm' in meiner Klage)." (Reese, 673). After 1525, Luther was mostly occupied with teaching and lecturing, and the leadership of the reform movement passed to his followers, of whom Philip Melanchthon was a leader. Lutheranism grew rapidly after 1530 and was firmly established by Luther's death in 1546. In 1537, Luther suffered a serious illness that left him a chronic invalid. In 1546, he returned to his birthplace, Eisleben, where he died of chill and exhaustion on February 18. He was buried in

the Church of All Saints in Wittenberg, on whose doors he had posted his Ninety-Five Theses.

Luther, the musician was influenced by many factors and many persons throughout his life, but the three composers for whom he had the highest regard were Ludwig Senfl, Josquin des Prez, and Johann Walther. "The Reformer was a remarkable judge of music, a discriminating connoisseur whose high standards are well demonstrated by his preference for such composers as Senfl and Josquin." (Buszin, 80). In a letter written to Ludwig Senfl on October 4, 1530, Luther says:

Grace and peace in Christ! Although my name is so thoroughly hated and despised, dear Ludwig, that I must fear you will receive and read my letter hardly with safety, my love for music, with which I perceive God has adorned and talented you, had conquered all my fears. My love for music leads me also to hope that my letter will not endanger you in any way, for who, even in Turkey, would find fault with anyone who loves music and praises the artist? (quoted in Buszin, 84).

In another statement, Luther admitted that he did not possess Senfl's skill as a composer.

I would not be able to compose such a motet, even if I would tear myself to pieces in the attempt, just as he (Senfl) would not be able to preach as I can. Hence the gifts of God are of many kinds and sorts, just as there are many different members in one body. (Erlangen edition of Luther's works, LXII, 309, quoted in Buszin, 85).

Luther counted composers and musicians among the ranks of learned men. He had the highest regard for the learning of musicians and did in no way agree with those who wished to regard them as intellectual simpletons. On New Year's Day, 1537, clearly using "ten years" as a round number, he remarked: "Alas, what fine musicians have died within the last ten years: Josquin, Pierre de la Rue, Finck, and many other excellent men. The world is

unworthy of her learned men." (quoted in Buszin, 91). Luther also had the highest respect for the music of Josquin des Prez. His remarks concerning Josquin reflect not only enthusiasm, but also profound understanding of the great music of his day, and also his dissatisfaction with other aspects of fifteenth and sixteenth century music. (Buszin, 91). According to Luther: "Josquin is the master of the notes. They must do as he wills; as for the other composers, they have to do as the notes will." (quoted in Grout, 173). Luther was especially influenced, says Friedrich Blume, by Josquin's "intimate alliance of word and tone." (Blume, 49). Luther recognized that God could work through music, and he used Josquin's music as an example.

God has His Gospel preached also through the medium of music; this may be seen from the compositions of Josquin, all of whose works are cheerful, gentle, mild, and lovely; they flow and move along and are neither forced nor coerced and bound by rigid and stringent rules, but, on the contrary, are like the song of the finch. (quoted in Buszin, 91). (original source: St. Louis edition of Luther's works, XXII, 427).

Martin Luther's close friend and musical adviser was Johann Walther, the German composer who laid the foundation for Lutheran sacred music. (Plass, 980). Among the most prominent arrangers and composers of spiritual songs (Geistliche Lieder), Walther was called to Wittenberg in 1524 to assist Luther in the musical problems of a purified worship service. One of the fruits of their labor was the Geistliches Gesangbüchlein of 1524, the first Lutheran book of chorales. (Plass, 980). Walther was quite a composer in his own right. He published several collections of polyphonic church songs, and various other compositions of his are found in miscellaneous collections published by German music publishers of the sixteenth century. (Strunk, 153). Luther held Walther in

high regard and it was he who was perhaps the most instrumental in organizing the music in the evangelical church and selecting the Germanized Latin chorales for use in the new service. (Grimm, 162).

The Lutheran Reformation has been called "the fountain from which flowed the main stream of sacred song." (Breed, 289). Much of the religious instruction in Germany was carried on through the singing of complex liturgical forms in Latin. "Luther could not separate spirit and flesh because man is a whole. Therefore art, music, and sacrament are the appropriate expressions of religion." (Bainton, 257). It was the use of music as the expression of religion which Luther tried to put into effect with his congregational hymns, at the same time making the words of the liturgy more understandable by using the vernacular. As an Augustinian monk, Luther had become well versed in the liturgy and music of the Catholic Church, and he recognized the value of preserving tradition as well as introducing new elements into it. Long after his death, "the Lutheran service remained partly in Latin and partly in German, and only gradually in the musical portion did German chorales take the place of Latin sequences, proses, and hymns." (Jacobs, 70). Even after the Lutheran movement was firmly established:

...the Lutheran Church still retained much of the traditional Catholic liturgy, along with a considerable use of Latin in the services; and similarly, much Catholic music, both plainsong and polyphony, was kept, sometimes with the original Latin text, sometimes with the original text translated into German, or sometimes with new German texts adapted to the old melodies (called contrafacta or parodies). (Grout, 229).

Unlike Calvinism and several other reform movements, Lutheranism held the art of music in high esteem. This fact is evidenced

by the growth of the chorale.(Young, 99). "The most distinctive and important musical contribution of the Lutheran church was the strophic congregational hymn." (Grout, 229). Franz Lau has said that Luther introduced the evangelical chorale into the worship service. "...he did so in the sense that through his influence there developed a powerful movement of congregational singing in evangelical Germany." (Lau, 101).

Luther was enough of a musician to be able to direct the reformation of the musical part of the liturgy. "Congregational song became an expression of the very faith of the Reformers, not a mere form of worship. Luther was the first to perceive its relations to his doctrines and the first to promote its use. Fortunately he was both poet and musician himself, and capable of directing the reform." (Breed, 289).

The participation of the congregation in the musical portion of the worship service became one of the major aims of Luther.

...a place was reserved for a massed choir, with melodies that could be learnt and sung by a determined congregation. And generally, throughout the Protestant tradition, vocal and musical participation of the congregation, whether in the formal parts of the liturgy, or in newly composed hymns, became an appropriately significant mark of 'reformed' worship. (Todd, 229).

Through both the chorale, or congregational hymn, and their emphasis upon musical instruction in the schools, Luther and his followers brought music to all the people. "This was the point," says Roland Bainton, "at which his doctrine of the priesthood of all believers received its most concrete realization. This was the point and the only point at which Lutheranism was thoroughly democratic. All the people sang." (Bainton, 344). Luther's insistence upon the use of the vernacular, and his desire to see

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the congregation individually and actively participate in the musical service helped to shape the whole character of the Lutheran Church. "The priesthood of all believers demanded a music of all believers, and it was found in the Protestant chorale." (Jacobs, 70).

In his efforts to bring the music of the worship service to all people, Luther enlisted the aid of many people and supervised the publication of various hymnbooks. "The oldest Lutheran hymnal (1524) is usually known in hymnological research as the Achtliederbuch (Hymnal of Eight); it contains eight hymns, three by Paul Speratus, one by an unnamed author, and the following four by Luther: "Dear Christians, Let Us Now Rejoice" (Nun freut euch liebe Christen), "Oh God, from Heaven Look Down" (Ach Gott von Himmel sieh darein), "Although the Fools Say with Their Mouth" (Es spricht der Unweisen Mund wohl), and "From Trouble Deep I Cry To Thee" (Aus tiefer Not schrei' ich zu dir)." (Leupold, 192). Later in 1524, the Enchiridion of Erfurt was published. This book of spiritual songs contained twenty-six hymns, eighteen by Luther. (Grimm, 163). The first hymnal prepared under Luther's direction was the Geistliches Gesangbüchlein, edited by Johann Walther and published in Wittenberg in late summer of the same year, 1524. Of the thirty-eight German chorales in this collection, twenty-four are by Luther. (Leupold, 193). Other hymnals whose publication was supervised by Luther include the Lufft Enchiridion of Wittenberg (1526), the Hans Weiss hymnal (Wittenberg, 1528), the Joseph Klug hymnal (Wittenberg, 1529), the Valentin Schumann hymnal (Leipzig, 1539), and the finest hymnal of the Reformation period, the Valentin Babst hymnal (Leipzig, 1545). (Leupold, 194).

There are conflicting views on the importance and the skill of Martin Luther as a hymnwriter. There are some who would credit Luther with many hymns which were not written by him, and others who deny that he wrote any at all. Much of this disagreement arises from the fact that Luther employed many familiar procedures and melodies in many of his hymns.

Lutheranism promoted a new conception of hymnody. Partly this was due to a long tradition of religious poetry in the vernacular, and partly to the especial concern of Luther himself. Luther wrote a number of poems which have become part of the heritage of Protestantism and he also composed a number of melodies for chorales. (Young, 75).

Luther rejected Catholic form and theory in writing his hymns. They were plain and simple, and appealed to the common people because they were in the vernacular.

Luther began collecting and writing hymns in the early 1520's, and by 1524 he had written at least twenty-four. He continued to write his hymns for twenty years or so, but he was so concerned with quality, rather than quantity, that he only averaged about one a year. (Breed, 39). More than two-thirds of Luther's hymns were written between the late fall of 1523 and the summer of 1524. (Leupold, 193). In all Luther wrote forty-two hymns, and fifteen other bits of versification, including an epitaph for his daughter, some verses on his housekeeping, and several lampoons. (Smith, 231).

Luther made use of several techniques in writing his hymns. Some of his hymns are newly-composed, but others are parodies (contrafacta) of secular songs. A famous example of this type of hymn is Luther's Christmas song for children, Von Himmel hoch, da komm' ich her, based on the secular song Aus fremden Landen

komm' ich her. (Reese, 675). Other hymns were adapted from pre-Reformation hymns, such as Gott sei gelobet. Still others were translated by Luther into the vernacular, keeping both the text and the melody of the original. Examples are: Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland from Veni Redemptor gentium; Christum wir sollen loben schon from A solis ortus cardine; and Komm Gott Schöpfer, heiliger Geist from Veni Creator Spiritus. (Reese, 674). At least one hymn used the old text with a new melody (Mitten wir im Leben sind). (Reese, 674). "The very first hymn by Luther, "A New Song Here Shall Be Begun," (Ein neues Lied wir heben an), is modeled after the folk ballads, which told the stories of important events and personalities. Characteristic stock phrases and melodic turns of the folk song are found in all of Luther's hymns." (Leupold, 196). Many of Luther's hymns were sung to other tunes unaltered, but also there are many whose melody he reshaped to better accompany the text.²

Luther's most famous hymn, Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott, first appeared in February, 1528 in the Wittenberg Hymnbook of Weiss. (Lau, 101). This hymn is still of interest and much-used today, and most persons credit Luther with both the words and the music. Wilhelm Bäumker attempted to show how Ein feste Burg was derived from portions of Gregorian melodies, but like many others who have attempted to prove that Luther was in no way creative in writing his melodies, "he failed to explain how, out of a mosaic-like combining of melodic fragments, melodies

² A list of the sources of melodies for Luther's hymns and a liturgical and topical index of his hymns may be found at the end of this paper.

of such unity and magnificent impression could have grown." (Ameln, 20). Bäumker, in his first volume of Das deutsche Kirchenlied (1886), recognized that "Most of the melodies of Luther's hymns, even in the case where they are of older origin, experienced a distinctive redaction which we can describe as a good one." (Ameln, 20).

Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott has been translated into more languages than any other hymn, and has received some sixty-three translations into English. (Tillett, 57). The hymn, set to rugged music, spread throughout the land and soon became the national hymn of Protestant Germany. (Tillett, 57). Luther and his associates used it daily, and Gustavus Adolphus had his entire army sing it before the battle of Leipzig on September 17, 1631. Indeed it became known as the battle hymn of Protestantism. (Tillett, 57). Luther was very much inspired by the words of Psalm Forty-Six ("God is our refuge"), and the text of Ein feste Burg is a paraphrase of this Psalm. This hymn is Luther's most famous, and is often called "Luther's hymn." (Breed, 40). Frederick the Great once called it "God Almighty's Grenadier March" (Stead, 57), and the poet Heinrich Heine called this hymn the "Marseillaise of the Reformation." (Tillett, 57).

All of Luther's hymns, but most especially Ein feste Burg, served as an excellent medicine for the persecuted Protestants. Luther through his hymns revived the spirits and the courage of his most dejected followers. His hymns spread throughout Germany, and were received and sung by the people with delight. "The hymns of Luther and his colleagues, however, were not songs to be sung from a book. They impressed themselves swiftly upon

the memory of the people and became in this unequivocal sense a living possession of the congregation." (Lau, 101).

So effective were his hymns in spreading the Reformation, in fact, that "Luther's enemies often feared them more than his sermons." (Grimm, 163). In one authority's opinion, Luther's doctrine would have fallen comparatively flat had it not been for his hymns and psalms. (Stead, 12). Wandering students and pedlars carried them throughout the country, and they became so popular that they even found their way into the Roman Catholic Church. (Stead, 12). An example of one such hymn which found its way into the Catholic Church is O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden, whose melody originated from Hassler's love song Mein G'müt ist mir verwirret. This song was soon spiritualized to the chorale Herzlich tut mich verlangen, and then the Catholics adopted the same tune for the Latin hymn Salve caput cruentatum. (Bukofzer, 80). Luther wove the gospel into his hymns and they became widely circulated. One Romanist of the time wrote: "The whole people is singing itself into this Lutheran doctrine." (quoted in Tillett, 422).

As stated earlier, there has been much dispute over the question of how skillful a musician Martin Luther really was. Musicologists are even in disagreement as to how many hymn tunes to credit to Luther. Certainly Luther recognized the importance and possibilities of hymns, encouraged his friends to write them, and also wrote many himself. "Today musicologists are inclined to accept Luther as the composer of most if not all of the new melodies that appeared with his hymns, especially in the Wittenberg hymnals, and as the arranger of some of the

older tunes." (Leupold, 202). Luther had a good notion of what a hymn tune should be like. He once said: "How is it that in matters concerning the flesh we have so many fine poems and hymns but that in those concerning the spirit we have such sluggish, cold affairs?" (quoted in Plass, 981). On another occasion, he commented:

The words of hymns should have a swing and a good strong metre, so that the congregation might catch up the tune to join in with it. Let us bid good-bye to the music of Gregory, and take the common songs of our own people as they sing them at harvests, at village festivals, at weddings, and at funerals, for use in our churches. Man can as well praise God in one tune as the other, and it is a pity that such pretty songs as these should be kept any longer from the service of their Maker. (quoted in Stead, 12).

Luther was educated well enough in the principles of musical composition to enable him to write several forms of music. In addition to his hymns, Luther wrote a short motet on the words Non moriar, sed vivam (Ps. 118, 17). "It is not great music; Luther would likely have been the first to admit this. It is however, typical of Luther's nature and spirit, based as it was on a passage that afforded him great comfort." (Buszin, 95). In all of his hymns and songs, Luther preferred strong and rugged musical verse and unsymmetrical rhythms with stanzas closing with an unrhymed line. (McGiffert, 316). "Certainly he knew how to compose simple melodies, to harmonize and arrange. Above all else he was able to inspire, because his enthusiasm for music was so great." (Bainton, 340).

Time and again Martin Luther expressed his feelings about music in his sermons, writings, and his casual comments to his students and friends. "The very fact that he discoursed on music on many occasions proves that the thoughts and opinions

he expressed were well established convictions and were not merely casual or transitory. His statements likewise show that his musical philosophy was carefully thought out, logical, sincere, enthusiastic, and applicable to situations of life and ecclesiastical activity." (Buszin, 80-81). That Luther was devoted to and had a natural talent for music has already been emphasized. His exaltation of this beloved art never ceased during his lifetime. Once he wrote: "Next to the word of God, only music deserves to be extolled as the mistress and governess of human feelings." (quoted in Jacobs, 70). And on another occasion, Luther is reported to have exclaimed with enthusiasm: "He who is musical is equal to anything." (quoted in McGiffert, 13).

Luther often spoke of the emotional effect of music on man and its power over the feelings of man. "It was his opinion that music, above all other things, had the power of producing pious reflections in the heart, and of elevating it to God." (Luther, Commentary, 74). Luther recognized music as a means of escape, and he extolled it because of its power to expel evil thoughts and make men gentler and milder. According to Luther, music satisfies, refreshes, and cheers the heart. (Köstlin, 473). Luther also often prescribed good music as a remedy against the devil and sadness. In a comment on the superscription of Psalm Four, Luther noted the use of music in the Old Testament:

About the praise and power of music, which have been sufficiently treated by others, I am silent except for the remark that here it appears that of old the use of music was sacred and was adapted to divine matters but that in the course of time it was (as everything else) pressed into the service of luxury and lust. For by it

also the evil spirit of Saul was driven off (1 Samuel 16: 23), and the prophetic spirit was given to Elisha (2 Kings 3:15). (quoted in Plass, 980).

Luther once stated that: "Music has the natural power of stimulating and arousing the souls of men." (quoted in Plass, 982). And one day, he remarked on the effect music had on him. He said: "Music is God's greatest gift. It has often so stimulated and stirred me that I felt the desire to preach." (quoted in Plass, 982).

Martin Luther often used the phrase "gift of God" when referring to music. "Music he loves and practices with great zeal, not because it is useful, but because it is the greatest earthly pleasure and the finest gift with which God has adorned this miserable life." (Böhmer, 185). In the preface to a collection of part-songs (1538) based on the suffering and death of Christ, Luther stated:

I most heartily desire that music, that divine and most precious gift, be praised and extolled before all people. However, I am so completely overwhelmed by the quantity and greatness of its excellence and virtues, that I can find neither beginning nor end, nor adequate words and expressions to say what I ought...
...use the gift of music to praise God and Him alone, since he has given us this gift. (quoted in Buszin, 81-82).

In his foreword to Georg Rhau's Symphoniae incundae atque adeo breves quattuor vocum, ab optimis quibusque musicis compositae (1538), Luther said much the same:

I, Doctor Martin Luther, wish all lovers of the unshackled art of music grace and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ! I truly desire that all Christians would love and regard as worthy the lovely gift of music, which is a precious, worthy, and costly treasure given mankind by God. The riches of music are so excellent and so precious that words fail me whenever I attempt to discuss and describe them... (quoted in Buszin, 83).

On December 17, 1538, Luther was being entertained in the house of a musical family, whose playing pleased him so, that he was reported to have exclaimed: "If our Lord grants us such noble gifts in this life, which is but filth and misery, what will it be in the life everlasting? This is a foretaste." (quoted in Michelet, 195). Luther summarized his views on the divine gift of music in a thesis entitled "Concerning Music" which he began, but never finished.

I am not satisfied with him who despises music, as all fanatics do; for music is an endowment and a gift of God, not a gift of men. It also drives away the devil and makes people cheerful; one forgets all anger, unchasteness, pride, and other vices. I place music next to theology and give it the highest praise. And we see how David and all saints put their pious thoughts into verse, rhyme, and songs, because music reigns in times of peace. (quoted in Plass, 980).

Luther freely expressed his feelings concerning the place of music in religion. Music, he believed, was a means of divine revelation through which God's Holy Spirit might work its way in the hearts of men. "He had an exalted opinion of the function of music in the divine service..." (Smith, 346). Luther believed that music should be used in the church to serve and to praise God. In the foreword to the Wittenberg Gesangbuch (1524) he wrote:

That the singing of spiritual songs is a good thing and one pleasing to God is, I believe, not hidden from any Christian, for not only the example of the prophets and kings in the Old Testament (who praised God with singing and playing, with hymns and the sound of all manner of stringed instruments), but also the special custom of singing psalms, have been known to everyone and to universal Christianity from the beginning. (quoted in Strunk, 151).

Luther strongly felt that the singing of hymns was beneficial,

especially when sung by the congregation. "For the evil spirit is not at ease when one sings or preaches God's Word in true faith. He is a spirit of sadness and cannot stay where a heart is spiritually joyful." (quoted in Plass, 981). Luther also had instructions for other musicians:

Christian musicians should let their singing and playing to the praise of the Father of all grace sound forth with joy from all organs and whatever other beloved musical instruments there are (recently invented and given by God), of which neither David nor Solomon, neither Persia, Greece, nor Rome knew anything. Amen. (quoted in Plass, 982).

In 1538, Johann Walther published a rhymed praise of music entitled Glory and Praise of the Laudable Art of Music. This was a didactic poem of three hundred and thirty-five verses in which Walther developed a whole theology of music along the lines of Luther's scattered remarks on music. Luther provided the following rhymed introduction for this work, entitled A Preface for All Good Hymnals:

Dame Music speaks:

Of all the joys upon this earth
None has for men a greater worth
Than what I give with my ringing
And with voices sweetly singing.
There cannot be an evil mood
Where there are singing fellows good,
There is no envy, hate, nor ire,
Gone are through me all sorrows dire;
Greed, care, and lonely heaviness
No more do they the heart oppress.
Each man can in his mirth be free
Since such a joy no sin can be.
But God in me more pleasure finds
Than in all joys of earthly minds.
Through my bright power the devil shirks
His sinful, murderous, evil works.
Of this King David's deeds do tell
Who pacified King Saul so well
By sweetly playing on the lyre
And thus escaped his murderous ire.
For truth divine and God's own rede
The heart of humble faith shall lead;

Such did Elisha once propound
 When harping he the Spirit found.
 The best time of the year is mine
 When all the birds are singing fine.
 Heaven and earth their voices fill
 With right good song and tuneful trill.
 And, queen of all, the nightingale
 Men's hearts will merrily regale
 With music so charmingly gay;
 For which be thanks to her for aye.
 But thanks be first to God, our Lord,
 Who created her by his Word
 To be his own beloved songstress
 And of musica a mistress.
 For our dear Lord she sings her song
 In praise of him the whole day long;
 To him I give my melody
 And thanks in all eternity. (Leupold, 319-320).

Luther recognized the wholesome influence of singing and urged his followers to sing doctrinal and other religious hymns at their work and play. (Grimm, 162). "Luther's people learned to sing. Practices were set during the week for the entire congregation, and in the home after the catechetical hour singing was commended to the family." (Bainton, 346). Luther's hymns were meant to convey a message, not to create a mood. "They were a confession of faith, not of personal feelings....They were written not to be read but to be sung by a whole congregation." (Leupold, 197). In 1532, Luther made the following statement summarizing his feelings concerning the art of singing. "Singing is the finest art and practice. He who is singing has no quarrel with the world and is not concerned with contentions in a law court. Singers are neither worried nor sad but shake all cares from their souls." (quoted in Plass, 982).

Luther often expressed his thoughts on the teaching of music. In 1538 he commented:

Music is an outstanding gift of God and next to theology.
 I would not want to give up my slight knowledge of music

for a great consideration. And youth should be taught this art; for it makes fine, skillful people...
 ...Music I have always loved. He who knows music has a good nature. Necessity demands that music be kept in the schools. A schoolmaster must know how to sing; otherwise I do not look at him. And before a youth is ordained into the ministry, he should practice music in school. (quoted in Plass, 979-980).

In his foreword to the hymnbook of Johann Walther in 1525,

Luther wrote:

I greatly desire that youth, which, after all, should and must be trained in music and other proper arts, might have something whereby it might be weaned from the love ballads and the sex songs and, instead of these, learn something beneficial and take up the good with relish, as befits youth. Nor am I at all of the opinion that all the arts are to be overthrown and cast aside by the Gospel, as some superspiritual people protest; but I would gladly see all the arts, especially music, in the service of Him who has given and created them. (quoted in Plass, 980).

So I pray that every pious Christian may bear with this and, should God grant him an equal or a greater talent, help to further it. Besides, unfortunately, the world is so lax and so forgetful in training and teaching its neglected young people that one might well encourage this first of all. (quoted in Strunk, 152).

In addition to recognizing the worthiness of music, Luther was also mindful of its need to be supported by men of means. "Music is a very fine art. The notes can make the words come alive. It puts to flight every spirit of sadness, as is written of Saul (1 Samuel 16:23). ...Princes and kings must support music and the other arts too; for although private people love them, they cannot support them." (quoted in Plass, 980).

Martin Luther's influence upon musicians and the history of music following his death was enormous. Some blind enthusiasts have even called him "the Palestrina of Lutheranism and Protestantism." (Buszin, 80). In abolishing the Mass and the

Latin church hymns, he gave to both his admirers and opponents the regular sermon and the Protestant church hymn. (Freytag, 101). "Because of his intense interest in music and because of his philosophy concerning its nature, uses, import, and purposes, men like Schütz, Buxtehude, Pachelbel, Bach and a host of others have been encouraged and impelled to write some of the world's greatest music." (Buszin, 96).

Both Bach and Handel were influenced by Luther and both used melodies originally written by him, although this is true of Handel to a lesser extent due to his professional duties and his place of residence. Handel's grandfather was a Lutheran minister, and like Bach, he was brought up in the Lutheran tradition. (Young, 99). However, most of his life was spent outside of Lutheran Germany and he was mostly employed by secular courts and was, therefore, not as concerned with chorale-derived music as was Bach. Bach, a Lutheran composer and the Thomas Cantor of Leipzig, considered it his chief purpose to praise God in the orthodox Lutheran sense. (Grimm, 614). "Bach, in his choral music, was primarily concerned in satisfying the requirements of the Lutheran Church. We may then observe the particular influence of the Lutheran conception of worship on the development of music." (Young, 98).

Martin Luther's place in the history of Western civilization is secure not only because of his career as a reformer of religion, but also because of the significant contributions which he made in the field of music.

...Luther never restricted himself--and in this respect he is again like Augustine--merely to the field of religion.

He embraced the whole of cultural life. Medieval civilization was altogether an ecclesiastical one, i.e., a civilization founded and dominated by the Church. By attacking the Church, therefore, Luther, without realizing it, at the same time provided the impetus for the abolition of the civilization, created and directed by it, and for the growth of a new civilization. Solely about this there is no doubt: That he blazed a path for the new age at just that point from out of which the recasting of civilization, as things stood, could alone proceed, and that for this reason if for none other he may be called and celebrated a hero of civilization. (Böhm, 318).

It has been said that Luther did as much for the Reformation by his hymns as by his sermons. "There is ample evidence that German hymns were sung during the service before Luther's alterations; but, if not the actual founder, there is no doubt that he was the establisher of congregational singing." (Grove's, V, 445). Walter Buszin, at the end of his article "Luther on Music," gives a most accurate assessment of the place held by Martin Luther in the history of music. He writes:

Luther's whole approach to music ultimately helped substantially to produce not only great hymns, notably the chorales of the Lutheran Church, but also great choral as well as great instrumental music. Indeed, Luther's mere statements concerning music justify the conclusion reached by Paul Henry Lang: "In the center of the new musical movement which accompanied the Reformation stands the great figure of Martin Luther. He does not occupy this position because of his generalship of the Protestant movement, and nothing is more unjust than to consider him a sort of enthusiastic and good-natured dilettante." (Lang, 207; quoted in Buszin, 97).

Sources of Melodies

Pre-Reformation Melody

Luther Hymn

Latin Hymns:

A solis ortus cardine	Christum wir sollen loben schon	Jesus We Now Must Laud and Sing
Hostis Herodes impie	Was fürchtest du, Feind Herodes sehr	Herod, Why Dreatest Thou a Foe
O lux beata trinitas	Der du bist drei in Einigkeit	Thou who Art Three in Unity
Veni creator spiritus	Komm, Gott Schöpfer Heiliger Geist	Come, God Creator Holy Ghost
Veni redemptor gentium	Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland	Come, the Heathen's Healing Light

Latin Antiphons:

Media vita in more sumus	Mitten wir im Leben sind	In the Midst of Life We Are
Da pacem domine	Verleih uns Frieden	Grant Peace in Mercy, Lord, We Pray
Veni sancte spiritus	Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott	Come, Holy Spirit Lord and God

German Leisen:

In Gottes Namen fahren wir	Dies sind die heiligen zehn Gebot	These Are the Holy Ten Commands
Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist	Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist	Now Let Us Pray to the Holy Ghost
Gott sei gelobet	Gott sei gelobet	Let God Be Blest
Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ	Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ	All Praise to Thee, O Jesus Christ

Credo Hymn:

Wir glauben all an einen Gott	Wir glauben all an einen Gott	In One True God We All Believe
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Secular Folk song:

Ich komm aus fremden Landen her	Vom Himmel kam der Engel Schar	From Heaven the Angel Troop Came Near
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Sacred Folk song:

Begierlich in dem Herzen mein	Ach Gott von Himmel sieh darein	Ah God, from Heaven Look Down
Gott der Vater wohn uns bei	Gott der Vater wohn uns bei	God the Father with Us Be
Erfreue dich, liebe Christengemein	Nun freut euch liebe Christen	Dear Christians, Let Us Now Rejoice
Maria du bist Gnaden roll	Es wollt uns Gott	Would That the Lord Would Grant Us Grace

John Huss:

Jesus Christus nostra salus	Jesus Christus unser Heiland	Jesus Christ, Our God and Savior
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Bohemian Brethren:

Begehren wir mit Innigkeit	Vater unser im Himmelreich	Our Father in the Heaven who Art
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Liturgical and Topical Index

The Service

Introit:	Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist	Now Let Us Pray to the Holy Ghost
Gloria:	All Ehr und Lob soll Gottes sein	All Glory, Laud, and Praise Be Given
Credo:	Wir glauben all an einen Gott	In One True God We All Believe
After the Sermon:	Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort	Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word
	Verleih uns Frieden	Grant Peace in Mercy, Lord, We Pray
Sanctus:	Jesaja dem Propheten das geschah	Isaiah 'Twas the Prophet
Communion:	Jesus Christus unser Heiland	Jesus Christ, Our God and Savior
Post-Communion:	Gott sei gelobet	Let God Be Blest
Closing:	Es wollt uns Gott	Would That the Lord Would Grant Us Grace
Evening:	Der du bist drei in Einigkeit	Thou who Art Three in Unity

Wedding

Wohl dem der in Gottes Furcht	Happy who in God's Fear Doth Stay
Gott der Vater wohn uns bei	God the Father with Us Be

Funeral

Aus tiefer Not	From Trouble Deep I Cry to Thee
Mitten wir im Leben sind	In the Midst of Life We Are
Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin	In Peace and Joy I Now Depart

The Church Year

Advent:	Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland	Come, the Heathen's Healing Light
Christmas:	Christum, wir sollen loben schon	Jesus We Now Must Laud and Sing
	Gelobet seist du, Jesus Christ	All Praise to Thee, O Jesus Christ
	Vom Himmel Hoch	From Heaven on High I Come to You
	Vom Himmel kam der Engel Schar	From Heaven the Angel Troop Came Near
Epiphany:	Was fürchtest du, Feind Herodes sehr	Herod, Why Dreadest Thou a Foe
	Wohl dem der in Gottes Furcht	Happy who in God's Fear Doth Stay
	Wär' Gott nicht mit uns	Were God Not with Us at This Time
Pre-Lent:	Es spricht der Unweisen Mund wohl	Although the Fools Say with Their Mouth

Lent:	Dies sind die heiligen zehn Gebot	These Are the Holy Ten Commands
	Mensch, willst du leben seliglich	Man, Wouldst Thou Live All Blissfully
Presentation:	Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin	In Peace and Joy I Now Depart
Easter:	Christ lag in Todesbanden	Death Held Our Lord in Prison
	Jesus Christ, unser Heiland	Jesus Christ, Our Savior True
Pentecost:	Komm, Gott Schöpfer Heiliger Geist	Come, God Creator Holy Ghost
	Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist	Now Let Us Pray to the Holy Ghost
	Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott	Come, Holy Spirit Lord and God
Trinity:	Gott der Vater wohn uns bei	God the Father with Us Be
	Wir glauben all an einen Gott	In One True God We All Believe
St. Michael and All Angels:	Sie ist mir lieb, die werthe Magd	To Me She's Dear, the Worthy Maid
<i>The Catechism</i>		
First Part:	Dies sind die heiligen zehn Gebot	These Are the Holy Ten Commands
	Mensch, willst du leben seliglich	Man, Wouldst Thou Live All Blissfully
Second Part:	Wir glauben all an einen Gott	In One True God We All Believe
Third Part:	Vater unser im Himmelreich	Our Father in the Heaven who Art
Fourth Part:	Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam	To Jordan When Our Lord Had Gone
Fifth Part:	Jesus Christus unser Heiland	Jesus Christ, Our God and Savior
<i>The Gospel of the Reformation</i>		
	Ein neues Lied wir heben an	A New Song Here Shall Be Begun
	Nun freut euch, liebe Christen	Dear Christians, Let Us Now Rejoice
	Ach Gott vom Himmel, sieh darein	Ah God, from Heaven Look Down
	Ein feste Burg	Our God He Is a Castle Strong
	Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort	Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word

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